

“We’re such a warm, friendly little church.”.....”They’re so cold and unfriendly!”

How can we *express* our congregation’s friendliness through simple hospitality?

Most people’s decision to return to a particular church is made in the first ten minutes of their arrival. Therefore.....

Is there enough parking? Are there specially marked parking places near the entry for elderly and for guests?

Are the grounds clean and picked up? Is ice removed from the driveway and walkways? The mowed grass is swept off the sidewalks?

Do Host families open the door for people as they arrive? Do they introduce themselves (in addition to wearing name tags) if they do not know someone? Are they taught to ask if people would like them to hang up their coats (and show them where they are hung)? Do they remember to invite people to stay for refreshments? Are there umbrellas available for them to use for people on rainy days?

Are there signs telling where the restrooms and phones are located?

Do the ushers greet them in a friendly fashion, introducing themselves to those they do not know?

Are the bulletins formatted for those who might be unfamiliar with your worship styles? Have they been checked for mistakes? Is the copy quality conducive to easy reading?

Can people hear and see all that is happening during the worship celebration?

What means is used to ask guests to share their names and addresses, while respecting many people’s need for anonymity?

Now that the worship has begun....

Are there a variety of worship options so people of different age groups can experience the language and music which is most meaningful for them?

Are the worship leaders leading with a sense of joy....or wonder...or gratitude...or...., depending on the theme of the day?

Does the worship celebration flow smoothly and efficiently, with each leader knowing her or his part?

Are theological words kept to a minimum, and carefully explained when they are used?

Is the sermon less an effort to “illustrate a point” and more an effort to “animate an experience” (L. Sweet)? Are there visuals and music incorporated into the sermon occasionally? Is it conversational style? It may or may not be from a pulpit, but is it still where everyone can see the preacher?

Are guests asked *not* to contribute to the offering plate, reserving that responsibility for the members?

Are the communion practices explained so guests will feel comfortable participating?

Are the members taught (over and over) the importance of simple hospitality? Is there a team of people with a spiritual gift for hospitality organized to reach out to the guests on their way out of the worship center?

When the worship celebration is over....

What kind of follow-up is in place for 1st time visitors? (Best = lay team within 36

hours)

Are “regular attenders” (who are not members) and seasonal guests known by name and greeted warmly? Are they invited into the life of the congregation beyond Sunday morning?